

REDISTRICTING/CONSOLIDATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

1/10/08

Dr. Horoschak welcomed all in attendance. The subcommittee chairs will report their group's findings, and the committee will look at next steps and analyze potential possibilities for next year and beyond. A major concern at the elementary level, he stated, is being able to maintain individual classes with a declining enrollment and money crunch. One concept, Dr. Horoschak suggested, is to look at having more split classes, which may not be in the best interest of students and teachers alike. However, a way to overcome the need for split classes is to have fewer schools with more enrollments. This can be determined with additional analysis. Dr. Horoschak asked Mr. Bushell to report on his committee's findings.

Mr. Bushell and his committee were charged with looking at Gorton Junior High School and its area feeder schools. He provided a feeder school chart depicting the numbers of 5th and 6th grade students (weighted totals), including regular, resource and intensive education. Mrs. Caporelli, Principal of Gorton, provided the team with enrollment information and informed them four open rooms were available and she could accommodate 100 additional students. From their discussions with Mrs. Caporelli, the team concluded that moving the 6th graders to Gorton is not a viable option because of space limitation. Twelve (12) rooms are currently needed. Also, this would

pose instructional discrepancies for students and would not result in any appreciable savings. This group also considered:

- (1) Bussing all 6th graders to Park or John Greene and/or trying to combine schools. However, the number of students did not warrant this. None of the schools at this time could be divided up.
- (2) Portable housing (trailers). This was found to be too costly.

Mr. Bushell raised the issue of how airport expansion would adversely affect current school district enrollment. His team discussed the three different expansion options and concluded that it was important to have more definitive information to guide the district's reorganization and consolidation planning and implementation. (The Airport Commission's recommendation is suppose to be released sometime in 2008.)

The Gorton Committee also discussed the enrollment data for the feeder schools, the challenges to making shifts in student assignments. This included, transportation, family/sibling considerations, school boundaries, school assignments and social and cultural factors that are endemic to Warwick. Regarding transportation, Mr. Bushell said it cost \$50,000 to put one (1) school bus on the road. Mr. O'Haire, Transportation Supervisor, confirmed this. A committee member asked if it cost \$50,000 to buy one bus or operate one bus. Mr. O'Haire said \$50,000 to operate one bus, we use First Student. (This includes fuel, driver, and bus aide.)

The Gorton Committee recommends that the district look at a comprehensive long-range redistricting program, taking into account the airport expansion and development at Rocky Point.

Dr. Mercurio's subcommittee was in charge of examining Aldrich and its feeder schools. He explained that his group's findings were similar in nature to Mr. Bushell's findings. They looked at:

- 1. Number of available classrooms at Aldrich, four. Twelve are currently needed.**
- 2. Possibility of using modular classrooms (trailers). They were not desirable educationally or environmentally; and the cost factor was too great. (Dr. Mercurio noted Dr. D'Agostino would expand further on the cost factor of trailers during his report.)**
- 3. The impact of the airport expansion was discussed; especially how it would impact the three elementary schools, Holden, Holliman and John Brown Francis. Aldrich and its' feeder schools are located in the northern part of the City.**
- 4. They looked at being more grade specific as opposed to a K-6, but determined the same number of students would be in the school, concluding this was not a feasible plan.**

The Aldrich team concluded they should wait until the airport expansion direction has been decided and then regroup and redraw lines. They talked about drawing preliminary lines within that particular

cluster of the city, and expanding that to look at the two other elementary/middle school clusters as well.

Mr. Bushell said the City Planner indicated to him that Route 37 might extend to Warwick Avenue and Namquid Drive. If the airport expansion takes that route, 308 homes might be taken out of the area.

This would be a huge impact on Holliman Elementary School. Dr. Mercurio pointed out that if you were to make a recommendation to shift lines now, you will be making another recommendation in two years or less, causing another disruption. If the airport does a Southern expansion, Robertson and Wickes elementary schools will be impacted.

A committee member noted that the City is planning on repaving Airport Road. Mr. Bushell said they are using federal money, costing approximately \$500,000. A suggestion was made to ask the City Planner to come to the next meeting. All committee members were in favor.

Dr. D'Agostino's subcommittee was in charge of examining Winman and its feeder schools. They concluded:

1. Moving the sixth graders in the Winman feeder district to Winman Junior High School was not a feasible option because of space constraints at Winman. According to a memo from Joanne McInerny, Principal of Winman, she indicated the school could only handle another 125 students. She indicated there were 4 available rooms at

Winman. Twelve (12) rooms are currently needed. The maximum number of students Winman can absorb is 145, which leaves no room for flexibility.

2.

3. In the Winman feeder area, the average building usage is 58%, with schools ranging from 31% (Potowomut) to 74% (Cedar Hill). 90% capacity is the recommended operating goal. Therefore, since no schools are experiencing overcrowding, the only purpose to move the sixth graders would be to implement a comprehensive middle school model which cannot be accomplished in entirety.

4. Potowomut is the one of the oldest schools in the system. Looking at the repairs which need to be done to that school over the next three to five years added up to about 1.3 million dollars. The committee recommends the consolidation of the Potowomut School with that of Cedar Hill School, with Cedar Hill being the receiving school.

5. Citing the possible Southern route airport expansion, which would affect Wickes and Robertson schools, the committee further recommends to defer discussion regarding consolidating other schools in the area until a decision is made on the airport expansion. Closing a school and moving students to other schools in the area was the best way to maximize savings given the time frame.

Dr. D'Agostino said the business office supplied him with several bids regarding mobile trailers, ranging from \$80,000 - \$100,000 for purchasing. These trailers would house approximately 25 students, and with the need for six trailers, it was concluded that the cost would exceed any type of savings. Due to the physical structure of Winman, the parking area is already very limited and the trailers would take away much needed parking spaces.

Dr. D'Agostino suggested the possibility of moving the seventh grades to the elementary schools and eighth grades to the high schools, creating a K-7 and 8-12 system. This would result in the closing of three junior high schools. Problems with this plan, he stated, would be a change in the junior high curriculum, lack of labs and other necessary equipment needed to teach at the elementary school, and the loss for students of a transition period from elementary to high school. Mr. Sangster clarified that the groups discussion on this idea came from a newspaper article, it was not his idea, and he believes the middle school is an important part of the Warwick public schools.

Dr. Horoschak asked if they had looked at and/or analyzed the prospect of consolidating all sixth graders into one elementary school. Mr. Bushell stated that all sixth graders could fit into Greene but it would not save any money and additional busses would be needed. Dr. Horoschak asked Dr. Mercurio if there were any

recommendations to create a true middle school and would it be in the best interest of the students.

Dr. Mercurio said he has not conducted such a study, noting that Cranston is looking to pull their sixth graders back into the elementary schools. His committee looked at the sixth graders (in a middle school setting) as a separate entity, not rotating their classes during the day, but remaining within their classroom. In terms of feasibility or what is best for the students, no long-term study or analysis has been conducted.

If the sixth grade went into a junior high school rotation, Mr. Bushell stated, there would not be enough labs and difficulty with a gym schedule to accommodate these students. Mr. Bushell recommended this be part of a long-term study. Dr. Mercurio said his committee discussed a 6, 7 and 8 school along with moving grade 8 up to the high school, but deemed neither beneficial for the students.

It was the consensus of the committee in order to move forward they needed the City Planner and an Airport Expansion team member to address them at the next meeting. Asked about a “deadline date”, Dr. Horoschak said by the end of this month he would like to see recommendations made. March 1, 2008 is the date they have to announce layoffs and June 12, 2008 for involuntary transfers.

Dr. Horoschak said the next Committee meeting date will be

announced when both the Airport and City Planners can attend together to address the Committee as a whole. If the audience has comments they are welcomed to write, fax or email his office and the committee will be apprised of them.

The agenda and minutes of these meetings will be posted on the Warwick Public Schools web site.

The meeting adjourned at 4:10 pm